City to Probe Report of Lost Kennedy Data

Council Asks Police, City Attorney Officials to Appear on Issue Today

BY WILLIAM FARR
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Representatives of the Los Angeles Police Department and the city attorney's office have been asked to appear before the City Council today to discuss reports that some key evidence in the Robert F. Kennedy assassination is missing.

The council voted 9 to 3 Wednesday to take up the issue today after Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky said he had been informed that certain evidence was missing or destroyed, including ceiling panels from the pantry at the Ambassador where Kennedy was mortally wounded.

The panels are considered by some to be of crucial importance because of questions about the trajectory and number of bullets fired the night Kennedy was shot.

Yaroslavsky said the first he knew of the supposedly missing evidence was when he read an article in the Daily Journal, a legal newspaper, quoting Dion Morrow, a special counsel in the city attorney's office.

Morrow, contacted in Sacramento where he was testifying on behalf of city-sponsored legislation, said he had been informed by the Police Department that two ceiling panels taken from the pantry were destroyed in June, 1969, a year after the assassination.

Morrow said the decision reportely was made by a low echelon member of the Police Department who noted the panels had never been introduced in the trial of Sirhan B. Sirhan, who was convicted of Kennedy's murder.

In asking the council to conduct an immediate hearing on the issue rather than refer it to a committee for study, Yaroslavsky said:

"This is not a normal homicide. This was an assassination which had ramifications not only throughout this country but throughout the world, and in that one year after the assassination some evidence such as the ceiling panels was destroyed raises some pertinent questions."

He was joined in asking for the immediate hearing by the same eight council members who Tuesday had seconded his motion asking the Police Department to make public its investigative files and physical evidence in the case.

Tuesday's motion by Yaroslavsky was referred to the council's Police, Fire and Civil Defense Committee. Councilmen Ernani Bernardi, Donald Lorenzen and Louis Nowell unsuccessfully sought Wednesday to have the missing evidence issue also referred to committee.

The delay until today in dealing with the questions came when Robert Thompson, the Journal's assistant city editor, and police commander Joseph Gunn said the questions would have to be answered by experts familiar with the case.

Yaroslavsky said he had been told that the left sleeve of Kennedy's coat was missing and that X rays of the ceiling panels and spectrographic tests on the bullets were not available.

Thompson pointed out that there had been a public disclosure even before Sirhan's trial seven years ago that the sleeve was missing, apparently having been cut off while persons attempted to give medical aid to the fallen senator.

Morrow said the ceiling panels were never X rayed by police and no spectrographic analysis of the bullets was conducted.

Morrow said he will return from Sacramento and intends to appear before the council to answer questions providing they do not prejudice pending civil suits connected with the review of the investigation.

Morrow is representing the city and the Police Commission in various suits filed in an attempt to make the Kennedy assassination evidence available to the public and the news media.